

JULY 24th

40,000 FEET ABOVE THE TEN WORDS

“When your son asks you in time to come, ‘What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the Lord our God has commanded you?’ then you shall say to your son, ‘We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt. And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. And the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes. And he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day. And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us.’”

Deuteronomy 6:20-25

Moses vs. Big Mac. Ever heard of such a thing? Neither had I, until I started researching how many people from the United States could recite the 10 Commandments. Kelton Research polled 1,000 people and asked them to name the 10 commandments while they were also asked to name the ingredients on a Big Mac from the Golden Arches. Even though the poll was conducted in 2007, the results can be quite discouraging. Only 10 percent of people could name all 10 Commandments, while 79 percent could recall that the Big Mac came with two all-beef patties. Now, you might be saying to yourself, of course they could say that the sandwich comes with beef...that’s too easy! However, compare the Gallup Poll from much earlier (1988) that states that 85% of Americans believed that the 10 Commandments are binding, but only 15% can name even five of them.

Before you shut off your phone after reading that paragraph, I’d like to say that this devotion isn’t about memory. Make no mistake about it, the Bible says: “your Word have I hidden in my heart that I might not sin.” Memory is important...and our goal in this devotion is to give you a tool for talking with your spouse, your children, and your friends about the nuts and bolts of these commandments. If someone actually asked you, “What is the meaning of these commandments? Why does God give them?” How would you answer them? There are a micro level and a macro level when we look at the Bible. We will get to the micro level as we examine each commandment for the next several days, but today is the zoomed-out version. Go ahead and try it...explain the meaning of the 10 Commandments in one sentence.

R. Kent Hughes in his “Discipline of Grace” summarizes the commandments in this way: “Commandments 1-4 teach love for God and 5-10 love for others; Commandments 1-4 teach reverence for God and 5-10 respect for others; Commandments 1-4 are vertical and 5-10 horizontal, Commandments 1-4 are doctrine and 5-10 ethics.” Have you ever looked at the 10 Commandments this way? From this view, it shows us much about how God gives His commands. I’ve covered this in the past few devotions, so I’ll make this brief...God shows His character first and then calls us to follow Him. God first, then our actions follow. Frankly, this is important to remember.

There’s two basic ways to approach Law in the Bible: “I don’t need the Law because I have free grace” and “I need the Law to make me acceptable to God. These approaches are known as antinomianism (anti-Law) and legalism. It can be tempting to view these approaches as opposite each other. However, they both come from the same diseased tree. They both doubt God’s good character. One approaches God as a divine police officer that’s just waiting to punish when we mess up. The other sees God as dismissive of our sin and misses God’s holiness. This is why a broad stroke over the 10 Commandments helps us. We first begin with God and our view of God impacts how we live. God is good to give us His commands because they show His character, and He is good because He provides a Substitute that can obey them, unlike us. How can your approach to God be impacted by seeing God’s character in the 10 Commandments?

Spend some time thinking about each of the 10 Commandments. How does each command point to His character? Take some time to praise Him as you read each one.

For Further Reading: Deuteronomy 6:4-9